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A CHRISTMAS DILEMMA

Copies of A Christmas Dilemma may be obtained for 50 cents each from
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FOREWORD

A CHRISTMAS DILEMMA is a skit which was given by the local staff of the Young Women's Christian Association at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, for their Association Christmas party in December, 1920. The parts are easy to learn, and, if advisable, the stage may be set simply by the Snowmen who take part. A paper of pins and the remnants of old, much-used Association costumes will fit out the actors.

In the original production the stage was marked off by Christmas trees arranged on three sides of a square, thus forming a charming background. Each tree was given by one of the clubs, and was to be sent to some group of poor children after the party at the Association. The clubs gathered under their respective trees and sang Christmas carols for half an hour. With the entrance of the Snowmen to begin the play, the club members withdrew to join the audience.

The author submits A CHRISTMAS DILEMMA, hoping that it may meet the need of some Association that will enjoy it as much as did the Lancaster Association.

Katharine Van Etten Lyford,
Girls' Work Secretary,
Lancaster, Pa.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

FOUR SNOWMEN

MISTLETOE

HOLLY

FATHER TIME

THE OLD YEAR

SANTA CLAUS

MRS. SANTA CLAUS

THE NEW YEAR

THE YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

- - - - - - - - - - -

The action throughout the play should be light and spontaneous. At the beginning of the play the SNOWMEN walk in stiffly, taking their places in the center of the stage, and forming a hollow square. They face outward.

After the SNOWMEN have taken their places, MISTLETOE and HOLLY come dancing in from opposite doors. When they reach the SNOWMEN, MISTLETOE flirts with them, holding her bunch of mistletoe over each in turn and kissing him; HOLLY tickles each under the chin with a sharp piece of holly. Finally HOLLY and MISTLETOE meet in the center of the stage, and begin a rollicking, flirtatious little dance. (A hide and seek pantomime around the SNOWMEN is effective.) For all the dancing use a concealed victrola or piano; the "Best Ever Medley", Victor record, which includes "Dance of the Hours" for the entrance, and "Love in Idleness" for the duet, is a good selection.

HOLLY and MISTLETOE finish their dance by sprinkling the Christmas trees with "star dust" from the SNOWMEN'S baskets, and hide as FATHER TIME enters with the OLD YEAR.

FATHER TIME:

Bear up, bear up, my tired son,
Your yearly journey is nigh done;
As soon as Santa's bells we hear,
Your work is finished. One more year
With all those past you then will be,
Sent off to live in History.

OLD YEAR:

I wish he'd hurry - - - I am faint;
With all my time I hope the Saint
Will not forget that twenty four
December days are almost o'er,
And only several minutes wait
To make it twenty-five, the date
Red-cheeked Kris Kringle knows he's due.
My hours ache; my seconds, too;
Still six more days -
(Catching sight of HOLLY and MISTLETOE)
I say! now who --

HOLLY AND MISTLETOE:

We're Mistletoe and Holly,
Both at your service, sir;
You don't look very jolly;
Pray, where's your winter fur?
Perhaps you don't remember

HOLLY AND MISTLETOE (Continued)

That Christmas time is here!
Take these from gay December,
(They offer the OLD YEAR sprays of holly and mistletoe)
Come kiss, and have no fear!
(MISTLETOE holds her twig high over his head and kisses him.)

OLD YEAR (Looking brisker):

Wait, Father Time, I don't believe
I want to be a year gone by,
This lively world is hard to leave,
I am not tired; I guess I'll try - - -
(OLD YEAR dances awkwardly a few steps)
Alack! three hundred fifty nine
Encircling days spent well or ill
Must satisfy. Few more are mine.
The New Year comes. I'm growing chill.
(Sound of sleigh-bells).

FATHER TIME:

At last here's Santa. Give applause!
And for the lad that's with him too,
Still more for jolly Mrs. Claus;
She'd melt the heart right out of you!
(This to the SNOWMEN)
And Old Year, ere you pass away,
Behold the young year, strange and new;
So greet him, pass the time of day,
And wish him luck for work to do.
(Enter SANTA CLAUS, MRS. SANTA CLAUS, and the NEW YEAR)

Old Saint, a welcome warm indeed!
Your merry face we badly need
To cheer the passing year's last days,
To thaw, in these, their hearts of snow,
(He points to SNOWMEN)
And coax the Holly and Mistletoe
To dance for us in graceful maze.
(HOLLY and MISTLETOE dance.)

SANTA CLAUS (Clapping):

Well done, well done! What's that, you say?
(HOLLY and MISTLETOE have whispered to him)
Wish me to take you far away?
To homes of grief and want - but stay",
What will these friends, the Snowmen say?
(The SNOWMEN wink and smile)

MRS. SANTA CLAUS:

To silence they're congealed
But slyly they've revealed
With genial wink and smile
They'd think it well worth-while
To speed the winter joys
Of little girls and boys.

SANTA CLAUS:

All right, we're off! But now, just wait!
Alas! I fear we'll be so late
In getting over all the world
That these will droop, their leaves be curled.
(He points to HOLLY and MISTLETOE)
Those jaunty Snowmen all will melt;
New Year be here; - I wish I felt - - -
(Enter Y.W.C.A. and rushes up to SANTA CLAUS)

Y.W.C.A.:

Why, Santa, I scarce thought you'd forget
That with staunch will, love stronger yet
Can always find a ready way.
I'm the Y.W.C.A.!
Now heed me all, good friends, I pray.
Beneath my roof, beside my hearth,
We gather girls all 'round the earth:
Americans, both black and white;
Outcast child widows, India's blight;
The factory girls in quaint Japan,
To whom we give what joy we can;
Chinese road-builders, women small,
With penny wages - yes, that's all!
The girls of Europe scourged by war,
Whose hearts with loss are aching sore.

As Father Time makes old earth spin,
New girls by thousands come within
My doors for comfort, cheer and fun,
So here I am, the very one
To bear your gifts across the sea
To gladden girls where'er they be.
Holly and Mistletoe I invite;
Snowmen, who'd surely melt at sight
Of Africa's rain or India's heat,
We'll send for Russian children's treat.

SANTA CLAUS:

You've solved the problem well, my dear,
One that's bothered all met here.
Now, Mrs. Claus, the basket please!
No lovelier toys are made than these
I brought with me from polar shops,
In which the Year and I made tops,
And kites and dolls and drums,
And every sort of thing that comes
In stockings hung on Christmas Eve.
(Sees OLD YEAR fainting)
Twenty-two (Supply right year,) my man! who would believe
That you were once like yonder lad!
(Points to NEW YEAR)
Cheer up, shake hands, don't look so sad!

OLD YEAR (Gasping):

I've just a moment more to say
That in the Y.W.C.A.
I've found good friends, light-hearted glee,
And shared in high festivity.
Here's my advice to you, New Year,
Lend a hand to further her good cheer;
And let us hope that when you're gone,
Still other years will carry on!

SANTA CLAUS (Catching the OLD YEAR as he faints):

Alas! he's almost dead, poor chap,
(NEW YEAR puts note in cap)
But what is this upon my cap?
Aha! Who put it there? Tis he,
That blushing bit of infancy!
(To Y.W.C.A.)
A message ere you speed away,
For you, my child; I'll read it. Stay!

(He reads)
"My loyalty this very night
To you, Y.W.C.A., I plight;
Though I seem small and young, 'tis true,
All Twenty-three (Supply correct year) belongs to you!

(The End)

SUGGESTION FOR COSTUMES

SNOWMEN - White pajamas covered with cotton batting (split so that the fuzzy inside part makes a feathery covering) and sprinkled with artificial "star dust". More cotton for hair, and faces powered dead white. Old men's shoes on feet and battered hats over cotton hair. Two carry brooms and two, baskets filled with "star dust". Clay pipes in mouths of all four. They walk in very stiffly, and throughout the play move as little, and as stiffly, as possible.

MISTLETOE - Pale green ballet dress, with small white or silver Christmas tree balls sewed on skirt or bodice to represent mistletoe berries. Ruff of crepe paper mistletoe leaves around neck and wrist ruffs of same. If leaves are wired they will stand up and prove most effective. One or two shiny Christmas tree balls in hair, which should be done high, and a piece of real mistletoe in hand.

HOLLY - Long green trousers made of sateen, and cut in points (which may be wired) at sides to represent holly leaves. Red Christmas tree balls sewed at base of each point will look like berries. Red flannel middy turned inside out will do for shirt, if bloused well, with ruff or green crepe paper leaves at throat and wrists. Red cap with green border and a sprig of real holly in cap and in hand.

FATHER TIME - Long grey robe, white beard and long hair, hour glass and scythe.

OLD YEAR - Dressed as page, gallant but almost exhausted. Cape and trousers made of black muslin with leaves torn from a daily desk calendar sewed on to them. If the calendar leaves are a bit torn or mussed, the effect is better. A page from a large calendar forms the vest.

SANTA CLAUS - Dressed as usual, but looking very tired.

MRS. SANTA CLAUS- Red dress and cape trimmed with cotton to represent ermine. Red bonnet and mittens; altogether a very jolly little person. Side curls, if possible.

NEW YEAR - Dressed a la Saturday Evening Post cover's idea of New Year, in white sateen knickers, swallow tail coat, high silk hat, a good bit too big, large white gloves and cane. He should be a child from about five to ten years old.

Y.W.C.A. - Dressed as you wish her - in white or blue, with shoulders through a large blue card board triangle, to represent a popular conference poster.

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